

Stink pipes

Wandsworth Park's very own stink pipes.....

Just behind the noticeboard, next to the railings, you may have seen something that looks like a Victorian lamp post. But this is taller and wider than any lamp post. In fact, it's a stink (or stench) pipe. Its job is to act as a conduit from the sewers by releasing all the noxious gases high above street level.

They were installed in response to the Great Stink of 1858 when London was brought to a standstill for weeks (even Parliament moved out to the country to avoid the smell). The Thames had been used as a dumping ground for years, and things came to a head during the heat wave of that year.

Two engineers were brought in to solve the problem. Joseph Bazalgette was one, he was given £3m to design and build a proper sewage system - the final cost was over £20m. The other was Sir Goldsworthy Gurney, a Victorian inventor who was asked to do something about the smell. His pipe ventilation system was a simple way to get rid of the fumes.

There are many stink pipes in South London - they follow the main sewers - you'll find others in Ram Street, King George's Park, Wakehurst Road, Clapham for example. They are hollow, made of iron, and often have some Victorian ornamentation (one of ours has a crown at the top)

The two in Wandsworth Park were made by Frederick Bird & Co, engineers and iron founders.

